

REMARKS

Claims 1-4 have been amended. Accordingly, claims 1-4 are currently pending in the application.

Priority

Applicants submit herewith a certified copy of the corresponding Japanese patent application (JP11-356466, filed December 15, 1999). An acknowledgment of the claim for priority and an indication that the document has been safely received would be appreciated.

In the Abstract

The Abstract of the Disclosure has been amended to be in better form under current U.S. patent practice.

35 U.S.C §103

Claims 1-4 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Monden et al in view of Queiser et al. These rejections are traversed as follows.

The present invention is directed to a single radioactive waste treatment facility that conducts both injection solidification and kneading solidification. Injection solidification is a method in which waste or radioactive waste is contained in a solidifying container and then a solidifying

agent is injected therein to solidify the waste. Kneading solidification is a method in which radioactive waste and a solidification agent are kneaded in a solidifying container to solidify the waste. The radioactive waste treatment facility of the present invention can conduct both injection solidification and kneading solidification.

For example, as shown in Fig. 1, in the case of injection solidification, a solidifying container 4 having waste contained therein is transferred to a first position by transfer mechanism 5. At this first position, a solidifying agent paste is prepared and injected into solidifying container 4. The waste in container 4 is solidified with the solidifying agent paste.

On the other hand, in order to conduct kneading solidification, a solidifying agent paste is provided in a solidifying container at a first position of the transfer mechanism. The container is then transferred to a second position in which radioactive waste and the previously provided solidifying agent paste are kneaded in the solidifying container in order to solidify the waste.

Claim 1 recites that the radioactive waste treatment facility comprises a transferring means, a solidifying agent injecting and kneading means and a waste charging and kneading means, as recited in that claim. None of the cited references

disclose all of these features of the presently claimed invention.

Monden et al do not disclose a waste charging and kneading means which is capable of charging radioactive waste into a solidifying container at a second location downstream from the first location at which the solidifying agent injecting and kneading means is located. Monden et al disclose filling a container 2 with pellets and providing a vibrator 17a (as shown in Fig. 2). According to Monden et al, pellets are contained in container 2 and the container is vibrated by vibrator 17a so that the upper level of the pellets are flattened. On the other hand, according to the present invention, a solidifying agent paste is contained in the container at a first location and radioactive waste is kneaded with the solidifying agent paste at a second location. While Monden et al provide an improvement for injection solidification, the present invention provides an improvement for both injection solidification and kneading solidification.

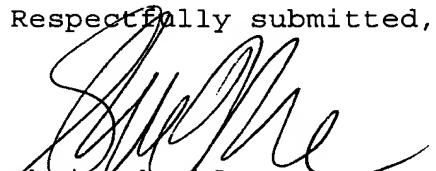
The deficiencies in Monden et al are not overcome by resort to Queiser et al. Queiser et al disclose a radioactive waste storage container with a binder to which radioactive waste is introduced so as to be blended with the binder. As such, Queiser et al disclose a method of kneading solidification.

However, it is submitted that the two separate methods of Monden et al and Queiser et al cannot be combined in order to disclose the claimed invention which provides for both injection solidification and kneading solidification absent hindsight reconstruction. Even if these references could be combined in the manner asserted by the Examiner, the combination would still fail to disclose the locations where the kneading solidification is performed and where the injection solidification is performed. As such, the pending claims patentably define the present invention over the cited art.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants contend that the above-identified application is now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, reconsideration and reexamination are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



Shrinath Malur
Registration No. 34,663
Attorney for Applicant(s)

MATTINGLY, STANGER & MALUR
1800 Diagonal Rd., Suite 370
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 684-1120
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